

month waiting period before he can receive benefits.

A veteran from Salina, KS, in the central part of our State indicates that he received double vaccinations before he was deployed to Desert Storm due to the fact that his predeployment package had been lost. He indicates he now suffers from several health conditions as a result and has been informed that the VA denies his benefits.

A veteran from Hutchinson, north of Wichita, indicated he has been fighting with the VA for 7 years on appeal. He has something pending with VA. They provided him an answer that was unsatisfactory, and he is appealing that decision. He claims the VA has continued dragging out his appeal process, and he has difficulty finding updates on his appeal when he contacts the VA. That is an example of someone who called the office and asked for help.

A veteran from Wichita said his doctors discovered a mass on his brain, and it will require an MRI to determine what the mass is. The earliest appointment available for him is on June 30. He, of course, as all of us would be, is concerned over that long wait. This is a veteran who has been diagnosed with a mass on his brain, doesn't know what it is, needs an MRI—exactly what a doctor would order to get additional diagnostic information—and cannot get the MRI until June 30.

A veteran from Junction City—which is a community that is adjacent to Fort Riley where a significant number of veterans and military retirees reside—indicates that he is living in a nursing home. He is 100-percent service connected with a disability and the VA is currently paying for his nursing home services. He has recently been informed that his physical therapy will no longer be covered by the VA and they are discontinuing payment but offer no explanation as to why. He filed an appeal late last year and has not received a response or status update from the VA since that request.

A veteran from Lawrence has had an appeal pending with the VA for over 1½ years and wants our help because he has received no communication from the VA in more than a year.

A veteran from Overland Park, KS—a suburb of Kansas City—is the primary caregiver for his wife who suffers from Alzheimer's. He has had tremendous difficulty in working with the VA to schedule appointments when he can be away from her to receive his treatments from the VA.

A daughter of a veteran from Wichita who passed away in the Wichita VA is concerned about the events that took place while he was in the care of the VA.

A veteran who lives north of Bird City, KS, is a category 1 disabled marine veteran due to a service-connected disability. He indicates that he has had two heart attacks and is now paying for stress tests and his own medical bills out of pocket because the VA has denied him fee basis. What that means

is if you are a veteran in Bird City, KS, which is the very northwest corner of our State, access to a VA hospital is a long way away, and that fee basis allows the veteran to receive care and treatment from a doctor and hospital closer to their hometown or neighborhood.

My point is that the people who are most deserving of care and attention are not receiving the care and attention they need. The Department of Veterans Affairs is supposed to provide the services and benefits earned and promised to those veterans. This is not anything that is out of the ordinary.

This report is something I read every week, and the reports that I convey to my colleagues here on the floor of the Senate are not unusual. I suppose what is unusual is that the number is increasing. What used to be a shorter list of problems with the VA has grown over time to be a longer and longer list.

I have been asking for a plan by the Department of Veterans Affairs from its top leadership, Secretary Shinseki, to explain to me, the Senate, the American people, and veterans what the Department of Veterans Affairs is going to do to meet the needs of these and other veterans across our country.

As I have indicated on the Senate floor before on this topic, if we are incapable of caring for our veterans today, how are we going to be capable of taking care of veterans in the future as more and more military men and women return from our wars in Iraq and Afghanistan? The physical and mental circumstances those veterans will find themselves in will be even more difficult and challenging.

We have an aging veteran population from World War II and now Vietnam veterans will most likely be needing more care and treatment from the Department of Veterans Affairs. What we need is the leadership that is necessary to meet the needs of these veterans and a commitment that the status quo is unacceptable and that the bureaucratic culture at the Department of Veterans Affairs is not something that is going to remain. There is going to be a concerted effort to make certain that the Department meets the needs of those who served and sacrificed for our country.

Again, who, other than those who served our country, would we expect to be at the top of the list to receive the most timely and highest quality of care than those who served our Nation? It seems to me that as these issues are raised, we have a Department of Veterans Affairs that is doing damage control. What we need is a Department of Veterans Affairs that reduces the damage being done to the veterans—the men and women who served our country—in Kansas and across our Nation.

I yield the floor and note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION ANNIVERSARY

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, last Saturday we celebrated the 60th Anniversary of Brown v. Board of Education. In that unanimous opinion, the U.S. Supreme Court held that the State-sanctioned segregation of public schools was a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment and therefore unconstitutional. The Court "concluded that," in the field of public education, the doctrine of separate but equal has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." This landmark decision is rightly celebrated every year.

The case of Hernandez v. State of Texas, however, decided by the Supreme Court just 2 weeks before the Brown decision, is an often overlooked and yet momentous advancement of civil rights in our country. In that case, the Supreme Court held that the Fourteenth Amendment protects those beyond the racial classes of white or black, and extends to all racial groups in the United States. Fortunately, we are only left to imagine a world without the Hernandez decision, a world that would have blocked Hispanics and other racial groups from the promise of equality made in the Constitution.

Taken together, the Brown and Hernandez decisions stand as landmarks of progress in our country. We have come far in the march towards equality; yet, we must recognize that we can and must achieve more. Six decades after the Brown and Hernandez decisions, our country must continue to confront social, economic, and racial inequalities throughout this country.

Racial inequality is not an issue that our society can just wish away in the 21st century. It still exists in our criminal justice system, educational, and voting systems, and in our housing and lending markets. As chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, and as a member of the Senate for nearly 40 years, I have fought to uphold the promise of equality in our fundamental charter.

The anniversary of these civil rights cases is a moment to reflect on our past, and to evaluate and commit to the next steps that we need to take as we strive to build a more perfect Union. As many families across the Nation celebrate the graduation of hard-

working students who have earned their degrees, it is important to also celebrate all who helped in the journey traveled. As former Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall once said:

None of us got where we are solely by pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps. We got here because somebody—a parent, a teacher, an Ivy League crony or a few nuns—bent down and helped us pick up our boots.

Let us rejoice as a nation that in 60 years we have made great strides. We must not forget that the promise of our founding charter is aspirational, and we are all made better by the fight to bring greater liberty and equality to the Nation.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I was necessarily absent from the Senate earlier today. Along with Senator AYOTTE, I was in New Hampshire this morning and afternoon attending memorial services for Officer Steve Arkell of the Brentwood Police Department, who was tragically killed in the line of duty on May 14, 2014.

I missed rollcall votes in relation to the confirmation of Stanley Fischer to be a Member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, and the motion to invoke cloture on the nomination of David Barron to be U.S. circuit judge for the First Circuit.

I support both the Fischer and Barron nominations, and would have voted yes if I were present during these votes.

TRIBUTE TO DR. JERRY BEHRENS

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, on June 6, 2014, the Wyoming Medical Center in Casper will dedicate its new Orthopedic, Spine and Surgery Center to an American patriot, Jerry Behrens, M.D.

For years, patients in Wyoming have known Jerry to be a compassionate, thorough, and trusted surgeon. He has cared for thousands of patients in Casper and around the State. What they may not know is that his character was shaped by the courage and determination he displayed half a world away in Vietnam.

Dr. Behrens always knew he wanted to help others. For that reason, he completed his medical degree and internship at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Although he was excited about beginning a family and a new career, he felt a calling to serve a higher cause. It was this desire which pushed him to volunteer as a medical doctor in the U.S. Navy during the Vietnam Conflict.

Attached to the 3rd Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment, Dr. Behrens performed surgery in very dangerous and difficult conditions. Jerry was assigned to Delta Med, a forward casualty receiving facility in Dong Ha. Soldiers with fragment wounds, lost limbs, and severe blood loss were triaged, treated, and transported to hospital ships for

additional care. It was not unusual for incoming rounds of fire to interrupt surgeries. Yet amidst the chaos and confusion, Jerry kept a level head and performed his duties with precision and professionalism.

Jerry later became the battalion surgeon for the Rockpile, Ca Lu and Khe Sanh Combat Bases. During this time, his courage was tested when his convoy was ambushed as they were making their way to Ca Lu. Of the 200 men in his unit, 70 were wounded, and 18 were killed. Jerry stabilized the injured while waiting for reinforcements. It was a harrowing experience, but it would not be the last time he risked his life to serve his battalion. Just a month later, his bunker at the Rockpile took a direct hit. Though he was uninjured, ten of his corpsmen were lost. Jerry was ultimately awarded the Bronze Star Medal with a V for Valor for his bravery and devotion to duty.

Upon the completion of his distinguished service to our Nation, Jerry returned home and completed his orthopedic residency at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. It was Wyoming's great fortune that Jerry decided to move his family to Casper to begin his orthopedic practice. I was lucky enough to be invited to join Jerry in his growing practice in Casper, WY, where his family and career thrived.

In 1991, Jerry's son Michael deployed with the U.S. Marine Corps as part of Operation Desert Storm. Jerry once again showed his patriotism and desire to serve. He contacted Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney and asked to be re-activated so he could provide medical attention to Americans serving overseas. Jerry was commissioned as a lieutenant commander in January 1991, after a 4-day whirlwind of paperwork, physicals, and phone calls. He put his practice aside to once again wear the uniform. He was deployed within 3 weeks to Saudi Arabia and went through the breach with the Marines into Kuwait.

Certainly his experiences, both in Vietnam and Desert Storm, shaped his character—and his career. As a fellow in the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons and a board certified physician, he has devoted his life to providing high quality care and service to his patients. With every surgery he performs, he demonstrates integrity and precision. In addition to his contributions to the medical community, Jerry also volunteers his free time to serve as a teacher, mentor, and friend to our servicemen and women. He is actively involved with veterans' organizations around the country and continues to stay in touch with the Marines who served with him in Desert Storm.

Jerry is particularly proud of his work with Semper Fi Odyssey. This is a week-long transition assistance program which helps prepare individuals for life after military service. Participants work in teams and learn valuable skills that help them achieve their per-

sonal and professional goals. Jerry has served as a team leader for Semper Fi Odyssey on eight separate occasions and continues to mentor the former servicemembers he met through this work. Needless to say, Jerry is a positive force within the community and we are fortunate for his remarkable contributions.

After practicing in Casper for 41 years, the community is honoring this patriot by unveiling the Jerry Behrens, M.D. Orthopedic, Spine, and Surgery Center at the Wyoming Medical Center. Hundreds will gather to pay their respects to this accomplished surgeon. At his side will be his wife Mary, his children Kelly, Mike, and Ingrid, and his two grandchildren Erik and Jasper. Bobbi and I will be honored to stand with him on this special occasion. I invite my colleagues to join me in congratulating Dr. Jerry Behrens and thanking him for a life and career devoted to service and the care of others.

WORLD WAR II VETERANS VISITS

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, today I am incredibly honored to recognize a group of 30 heroic military veterans who have traveled from southern West Virginia to visit our Nation's capital as part of the fourth Always Free Honor Flight. On the occasion of their visit, in which they will see for the first time the monuments built in their honor, I want to express my utmost gratitude to these special men and women for their extraordinary bravery and patriotism, and for their noble sacrifice to help keep our country free.

I have said this time and time again—West Virginia is one of the most patriotic States in this great Nation. With one of the country's highest per capita rates of military servicemembers and veterans, we are so proud of the many citizens who have served and who are actively serving in the military. The 30 veterans participating in today's Always Free Honor Flight truly embody the Mountain State's history and contributions to the safeguard of our American freedoms.

Our special West Virginians visiting today represent three generations of warriors—5 served in World War II, 9 served in the Korean War, and 16 served in the Vietnam War. They range from 63-90 years of age, and have traveled from all parts of our great State—from New Martinsville to Bluefield, Huntington to Princeton to Beckley, and many places in between. In addition to our Mountain State vets, two veterans from bordering Bland and Tazewell Counties in Virginia have accompanied their West Virginia neighbors on the day-long adventure.

I especially want to recognize our two women veterans who joined today's honor flight, both of whom are the first women to make the Always Free Honor Flight trip. Helen "J" Wheby served in the Korean war as an office worker in the Navy. Vanda Jane Butcher served in the Vietnam war